DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 208 815 IR 009 410

AUTHOR Bayfield, Juliana
TITLE Children's Library Services for Multicultural Societies in Australia.
PUB DATE Aug 80
NOTE 17p.; Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the International Federation of Library Associations (Manila, Philippines, August 18-23, 1980). For related documents, see IR 009 411-413.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Children; *Childrens Literature; Cultural Awareness; *Cultural Pluralism; *Ethnicity; Foreign Countries; *Library Materials; *Library Services; Minority Groups; Reading Materials; Tables (Data)
IDENTIFIERS *Australia

ABSTRACT

Responding to the increasing cultural and ethnic diversity of Australia's population and to awakening interest in its indigenous minorities, this paper examines problems of acquisition and dissemination of children's literature to preserve the cultural heritage of minority groups. Appendices display population by age groups between 1954 and 1977, populations of urban communities in excess of 100,000 persons, Australian and overseas-born population percentages 1954-76, aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations by state, and an analysis by age group of children of non-English speaking origin. (RAA)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED208815

IFLA General Conference 1980
Division: Libraries Serving the General Public
Section: Children's Libraries

10/CHIL/1E

CHILDREN'S LIBRARY SERVICES FOR MULTICULTURAL SOCIETIES IN AUSTRALIA

By

Juliana BAYFIELD
Senior Young Peoples Librarian
State Library of South Australia
Adelaide, AUSTRALIA

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Carol Henry

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

IR009410

Children's Library Services for Multicultural Societies in Australia

by

Juliana Bayfield
Senior Young Peoples' Librarian
State Library of South Australia
Adelaide, Australia

Paul Hazard in BOOKS CHILDREN & MEN put forward a concept of a "universal republic of childhood." This emerged from an appreciation of the uniqueness of each nation's culture together with the commonality of human experience underlying it.

> "Yes, children's books keep alive a sense of nationality; but they also keep alive a sense of humanity. They describe their native land lovingly, but they also describe faraway lands where unknown brothers live. They understand the essential quality of their own race; but each of them is a messenger that goes beyond mountains and rivers, beyond the seas, to the very ends of the world in search of new friendships. Every country gives and every country receives - innumerable are the exchanges - and so it comes about that in our first impressionable years the universal republic of childhood is born."[1]

Although Paul Hazard wrote specifically about children's literature his view could equally be applied to all aspects of cultural and racial diversity. The fear that differences of religion, law, customs and morals cause divisiveness in a society is often strongly felt and it is only recently that Australian Governments have promoted multiculturalism as benefiting the quality of life for all Australians.

Few Australians in the 1940's would have doubted that they understood "the essential quality of their own race." The vast majority of the nation's ancestors had at one time prior to the Depression years emigrated from English-speaking nations and the descendants of the minority from other countries had mostly long since been assimilated into an Australianized Western European, Anglo-Saxon, Christian culture. The Aborigines were not considered in the development of the nation and, except for the exotic sounding Aboriginal place names and the insignias featuring the boomerang, Australians gave little thought to the existence of the indigenous people.

Today, however, there is questioning of these cultural attitudes. This has been brought about partly by the current change in the pattern of migration, partly by the unhappy experiences of settlers during the post war years and partly by a growing concern for minority groups, such as migrants, Aborigines, and the handicapped, to be fully represented in the national way of life.

Traditional centres from which Australia had received immigrants since the late 1940's have altered over the past eight years. Whereas in 1972 seventy per cent came from Great Britain and Western Europe now less than forty percent are from these regions. On the other hand there has been a significant increase in migrants and refugees from the Middle East, Asia and South America.

In countries such as Australia which are now made up of a multiplicity of nationalities, religions and races, Paul Hazard's view of world civilization takes on even greater meaning particularly since the many nations are no longer in "faraway lands." Without recoguition and encouragement of their variety of traditions within a local community there can be no effective or stimulating communication between all members of society.

The realization of this has emerged over the past decade in Australia where there are now migrants speaking one hundred different languages and dialects and, of the population of thirteen and a half millions, some two and a half millions are of overseas origins, with one and a half millions coming from non English-speaking countries.

In 1978 an important report know as the Galbally Report, MIGRANT SERVICES AND PROGRAMS, was accepted by the Australian Government which adopted its recommendations and undertook to sponsor special programmes particularly for those migrants who have little understanding of English and as a consequence of

this have the most difficulty in settling into the community. At June 1976 it was estimated that there were 400,00 children of school age (five to fourteen) who came from homes where English was not spoken.

The writers of the Galbally Report believe that "Australia is at a critical statge in the development of a cohesive, united, multicultural nation."[2]

The assimilation of the non English-speaking migrants via the "melting pot" which was the policy of the early post war years has now been discarded for it has been shown that while the fittest emerged culturally and economically intact the rest had to contend with high levels of poverty, illiteracy and unemployment.

The Galbally Report states: "...there is signigicant evidence to suggest that many migrant students do badly in reading and literacy tests and have difficulty with normal classroom lessons - attributable in most cases to difficulties in coping with the English language. The implications of difficulties with English remain with some students throughout their lives and limit their ability to participate in more advanced studies, subsequent employment and community activities."[3]

Of equal importance it also states: "...we believe that hostility and bitterness between groups are often the result of cultural repression. We were informed, and observed ourselves, that some parents and their children had drifted apart because of what is referred to as the 'cultural gap'. In these cases the children at school or work observed that the way of life of their parents was quite foreign to their associates and was sometimes the object of ridicule. Rather than be seen as someone odd or different the children had rejected their parents' culture and attempted to take on another identity. They lost their native language and much of their culture in this process and became alienated from their parents. We observed that the trauma occasioned by the cultural gap has other effects. It is damaging psychologically and is an impediment to education thus preventing individuals from achieving their full potential."[4]

These findings have great significance for children's libraries whose administrators have reflected contemporary attitudes to migrants in their services and programmes over the years, initially by providing a solid diet of library materials in English and currently by attempting to accommodate a variety of resources for multilingual children.

Prior to the Galbally Report, three other reports had already made a strong impact on the library world and had alerted many librarians and civic authorities to the need for providing multicultural services for the community.

In 1973 Helen Modra and Des Pickering in LIBRARY SERVICES TO THE DISADVANTAGED[5] included migrants and Aborigines in their plea for more appropriate public library services for minority groups. For migrants they advocated the inclusion of non English books in the collections, the employment of bilingual staff and the arranging of displays, national nights and film shows. They included the requests from Aborigines, themselves, for librarians to reassess many of the Australian history books which showed bias against the Aborigines and they wanted a greater representation of works by Aboriginal authors as well as displays presenting all aspects of their culture. It was suggested that the most effective means of promoting the services would be to employ Aboriginal librarians.

Again in 1973 Thurles Thomas in her report, LIBRARY SERVICES TO MIGRANTS IN NEW SOUTH WALES,[6] emphasized similar solutions. She identified four catagories of library needs for migrants.

1) Materials to assist them to learn English as a second language, including graded readers, special dictionaries, tapes, discs and films as well as specially selected books and magazines.
2) Information about Australia and Australians - life, customs, flora and fauna, rules and regulations, community and government services etc.
3) Material to allow them to maintain contact with their own culture and country, particularly books and magazines in their own language but also books about their country in English.
4) Material in English of only a moderate degree of difficulty to assist migrant students of all ages in their studies where the language of the normal textbook may be too complex for ready Assimilation.

In 1976 the then Australian Government received a report on a major national enquiry into library services, PUBLIC LIBRARIES IN AUSTRALIA.[7] This recommended the spending of Federal funds on developing proper library services for Australia. Unhappily no Australian Government to date has acted on its proposals.

Children's libraries as part of public library services are financed by a varying combination of local and State funds. South Australia and Tasmania have the only children's libraries attached to their State Libraries which are in consequence, financed solely by State money.

The local governments obtain their revenue mainly from property rates and the six State Governments receive theirs from various sources, such as water rates and motor vehicle registrations and moneys from the Federal Government, which receives the totality of tax payable on the national population's income. To date the funding of local public libraries has not been sufficiently bouyant to enable the adequate provision of public library services for all Australians. This has been very largely the case in areas where the population is scattered over large distances or where local council districts have a low density of population and are, therefore, a source of low revenue.

Thus, without extra funding from the Federal Government, many councils are unable to provide any sort of adequate library service. It is hardly surprising that multicultural services which are expensive to maintain and require staff with special skills have also been slow to develop.

Victoria and New South Wales, the States with the highest multicultural population in their capital cities, have the largest collections of books in many languages, but progress has also been made in the States with smaller populations: for example, State money in South Australia over the last two years has boosted the establishment of public libraries especially in the Western Districts of Adelaide where there is a very high proportion of non English-speaking migrants.

Centralized bookstocks are being developed in all States in order to provide support services through bulk loans to local public libraries. These can be a valuable means of overcoming the changes in the nature of local districts due to movements of the migrant population effected mainly by inflation, unemployment and increasing land values. In these cases local public libraries can be embarrassed with either an oversupply of books or a sudden demand for them. Centralized stocks can also be helpful where the migrant population is scattered throughout a local community and is not of sufficient density to justify a specialized service. At present specialized services for Aborigines are negligble, but some librarians have re-evaluated library materials on Aboriginal culture and have prepared lists for both school and children's libraries on this

topic.[8] The Swan Hill regional library in Victoria has employed an Aboriginal Field Worker who assisted with their Aboriginal Outreach Project to enquire into the library needs of their Aboriginal population. "As a result of this project there has been an increased library usage by Aborigines."[9]

In a broad sense the recently developed policy on multiculturalism also has significance for Australian children's book publishing since the bulk of contemporary Australian fiction does not reflect the life which most children experience in Australia.

This is not to say that Australian children's fiction lacks realism for within the context of its setting it exhibits a deep appreciation of a wide range of human experience. It is skilfully written and frequently comparable with the most outstanding children's literature from overseas.

In language and style there is a true "sense of nationality: but there still needs to be an identification with the diversity of childhood experience in Australia.

The echoes of those English boy emigrants who explored the wilds in nineteenth century fiction can still be heard in the updated stories of their youthful descendants and their adventure in rural Australia. Occasionally a Greek, Italian or Aboriginal character adds a semblance of contemporary reality and sometimes urban life is depicted, but oftern these seem selfconcious attempts at presenting an antidote to the plethora of Outbackiana.

Many Australian children's books are published in England and the international market promulgates them in translation around the world. Just how far the overseas trade has influenced the development of Australian children's fiction is open to speculation. Children in other countries have certainly had a long-standing interest in Australian adventure with all its trappings of local colour. This kind of internationalism, however, contributes little to the wider view of contemporary life and it plagues the life of the children's librarian who is faced with an Australian child who wants to read about the city life around him. He is one of the seventy per cent of the people living on the south and east coasts of the continent in the six State capital, is the only city situated inland and in recent years the percentage of the population living in rural areas has been declining.

Australian children's literature has yet to reflect the variety of experience of the fourth generation Australian as well as the recently arrived first generation immigrant.

If the job of the children's librarian is made difficult by the paucity of fiction available in English about the experiences of migrant children in Australia the selection of foreign language material also has its problems. It is made especially difficult by the limited publishing of children's books in some countries such as Greece, Yugoslavia and Vietnam from which many of the children have emigrated. Moreover, the migrant children whose education is in a second language are not as literate as their cousins in their homeland whose education is in the mother tongue. So it is with their reading in their second language. Consequently too many of the children are cut off from the literature of both countries and have to make do with the English and foreign language remedial programmes which have sprung up in an effort to combat the situation. No matter how competently written and presented these are they can only assist with the development of literacy and can not provide the stimulation of a nation's imaginative literature. This situation may improve with the teaching of languages in Australian schools which are now including in the curriculum some of the more frequently spoken ones, such as Greek and Italian. It is also being assisted by storytelling programmes and the addition of spoken-word cassettes and records in some libraries.

In response to Australian librarians' concern for quality books with bilingual texts Judy Taylor of the Bodley Head undertook to publish several picture books including Maurice Sendak's *Where the wild things are* with English/Greek and English/Italian texts. It is to be hoped that this and similar publishing programmes will prove economically viable so that they will be expanded. Of equal value are the translations, especially of picture books, which the international market has provided in recent years. The original, together with the translation, can be of benefit to both the migrant child learning English and the Australian learning a second language.

Australia's vast distance from the centres of the world's book supplies has caused many problems of selection and acquisitioning of non English-language books. These difficulties have not been previously encountered in quite the same way with English books. Australian librarians are accustomed to selecting books from overseas reviewing journals and are practised at interpreting the reviews with Australian conditions in mind. They are also prepared to accept the time-lag

between the publishing of a new title, the appearance of a review of it and the supply of the book from overseas. Local bookshops have assisted with selection by providing books on approval and by supplying stocks quickly.

Faced with an unknown field and mostly not possessing bilingual skills, librarians have taken some time to find their way around the difficulties of locating overseas and local sources of supply and of becoming familiar with the actual publishing output of a particular country.

The usual methods of selection from journals and publishers' lists could not be beneficially employed, either because of an inability to understand the language, or, because these book selection aids are undeveloped in some countries and where available are not designed for the overseas market. Local booksellers were also in the same position, and the cost of imported foreign language books is a great deal higher than that of books in English. Mistakes can be very costly.

In order to lower costs some libraries, such as the Wollogong City Library in New South Wales, have developed co-operative acquisitioning programmes with other libraries.[10] In South Australia the centralized purchase of books for all public libraries in the State, as well as for the State Library, nas resulted in acquiring foreign language books at an average price which is equivalent to the one for English books.

During the 1970's there has been a growth in the number of bookshops which stock books in many languages, thus enabling children's and school librarians the opportunity of seeing titles before buying them.

Local community groups are assisting some librarians with selection and Carringbush Public Library in Victoria has an agent in Greece who has been trained by an Australian-Greek librarian to select books for the library.[11]

Overseas visits by librarians have helped to acquire materials and to make contacts with suppliers. Blanket orders, however, even with a specifically delineated profile, are not the most desirable way of acquiring books. A particular hazard of accepting books preselected by agents, booksellers or publishers, is the danger of including material with political bias. Should this occur inadvertently, it is received with great disapprobation from the national groups involves, their feelings on this matter being very strong since the political philosophies and practices of particular governments are often the migrants' very reasons for emigrating from their homelands. Likewise, hostility

can also be provoked if a book is classified by the incorrect country of origin. This can sometimes occur when dealing with unfamiliar alphabets.

These problems emphasize the need for multilingual staff to deal with all aspects of the services for multicultural libraries. Many libraries, such as Wollongong and Marrickville in New South Wales, Moonee Valley and Footscray in Victoria, have appointed Migrant Services Officers to their staff.[12] The importance of employing such specialists to communicate effectively with national groups can not be overemphasized. By interpreting the services to migrants and by helping them select materials of all kinds, the staff can overcome the initial reluctance to enter an institution of which many migrants may not have had any previous experience. This has been experienced at the State Library of South Australia where a Chinese-speaking librarian assists young adult Vietnamese refugees who make regular visits to the library.

It is often difficult ot publicize the public library to national groups who do not have a strong tradition of library use. Multilanguage pamphlets about the library, advertisements in ethnic newspapers and on ethnic radio have improved this situation where libraries have used these methods. School visits can also assist by firstly introducting the child to the library and then by encouraging the parents or grandparents to join when they accompany the child to the library at a later time.

Margaret Dunkle in her NOTES ON PUBLIC SERVICES TO CHILDREN'S ETHNIC GROUPS IN VICTORIA[13] has listed many Victorian public libraries where events, such as cooking demonstrations, national weeks and storytelling sessions have been arranged with great success for local national groups. Similar programmes have been arranged in other States.

In all but the large public libraries, however, it is not economically possible to employ staff with a variety of language skills. In some States this is overcome through centralized support services for public libraries, but in all States there is a trend towards co-operation thus best utilizing the skilled staff available in a particular region.

Although a start has been made in providing books and outreach programmes for migrant communities, the provision of audio-visual materials has been meagre. This is partly because children's spoken-word cassettes and records are scarce in many coutries of the world and partly because the audio-visual services of

public libraries in general are not highly developed in Australia. Most of the language cassettes produced in Australia have been prepared for school use and their content and pamphlet/cassette form of presentation are more suitable for the school than the public library. This area needs considerable attention.

Books and audio-visual materials relating to the interests of children in Aboriginal communities are also in short supply. There is not a flourishing trade in non fiction for any children in Australia due to the small size of the population and, therefore, the limited market for books on local topics and on specific interests for special groups. The small range of fiction with Aboriginal characters has already been discussed. From the late 1890s, however, there have been many versions of the Aboriginal legends published over the years. Initially, these were collected by white Australians, but in recent years, Aborigines have written down their legends in books, such as *Giant Devil Dingo* by Dick Roughsey and *The Aboriginal Children's History of Australia*, which was written and illustrated by Aboriginal children throughout Australia. The latter is the kind of project which greatly assists all children's appreciation of Aboriginal experience since it is written at first hand and presents the reactions of black children to the white man's culture, in addition to introducing children to Aboriginal traditions. More work needs to be produced in this field to ensure the preservation of the Aboriginal culture for black and for white children. In particular, the Aboriginal stories need to be preserved in print in their original dialects for future generations of children.

Australia in the 1980s is being faced with the same challenges to its economy as those of any other highly industrialized nation. Inflation is causing cutbacks in public spending and the growing use of technology in private industry and the public services is bringing hardship to a greater number of people. In times such as these, public libraries have an even more vital part to play in people's welfare. This is particularly the case with library services for young adults who are in the age group most drastically disadvantaged by current unemployment and its consequent frustrations and loss of morale. These young people of all national origins require specialized services to help them adjust to the changing times.

In Australia the provision of specialized services is made particularly difficult owing to the small population which is scattered over such a vast continent thirty two times as large as Great Britain and about as big as the United States of America.

A further trend which has become apparent over the last few years is the downturn in the birth rate in Australia. This, together with a slowing down of immigration, is causing Governments in all States to take a fresh look at public spending for institutions dealing with children, educational facilities being the major area under consideration at present.

Thus, while there is a renewed interest in the individual and in the right of minoirity groups to develop their potential, there is at the same time a halter being put on the growth of institutions which foster this. It is a time for re-evaluating the means of providing the best services within certain financial restrictions. In some parts of Australia such as South Australia, this is taking the form of complete amalgamation between school and children's libraries to form public library services for small country districts with scattered populations. In the large densely populated areas, which are found in Melbourne and Sydney, there is co-operation between public library services in an effort to save duplication of effort. A further rationalization of resources could be achieved through even more centralization of specialized materials.

The success of children's libraries for a multicultural population is dependent as much on the members of staff as on the resources. Their motivation and ability to communicate with the public is of utmost importance, so, too, is the way in which the libraries are received by the national groups, themselves. Currently the drive to establish multilanguage collections in children's libraries is helping to redress the balance for their scarcity in the past. There is a need to do this. The question still remains, however, of how far to take these new initiatives. While the parents of second and third generation children may desire their young to become fluent in the language of their homeland, will the children, themselves, wish this to happen? In the meantime the children's library must equip itself to keep pace with the current needs of the total society in order to keep alive "the universal republic of childhood".

REFERENCES

1. HAZARD, Paul — Books Children & Men. Boston, The Horn Book, Inc., 3rd ed., 1947. p.146.

2. Migrant Services and Programs: Report of the Review of Post-arrival Programs and Services for Migrants. Canberra, Australian Government Publishing Service, 1978. p.3.

3. Ibid. p.38.

4. Ibid. p.105.

5. PICKERING, Des & MODRA, Helen — Library Services to the Disadvantaged: a report to the nation. Melbourne, Australian Library Promotion Council, 1973.

6. THOMAS, Thurles — Report of the Pilot Survey of Special Library Services Availabale to Migrants in New South Wales, July, 1973. Sydney, Library Association of Australia, 1975.

7. Public Libraries in Australia: Report of the Committee of Inquiry into Public Libraries. Canberra, Australia Government Publishing Service, 1976.

8. Aboriginal Studies Library Project. Supplement to Review Vol.4. No.4. Adelaide, Education Department of South Australia, School Libraries Branch n.d.

9. RASMUSSEN, Radha & KOLARIK, Ivan — Public Library Services to Ethnic - Cultural Minorities in Australia: A State-of-the-Art Survey. Unpublished. p. 14

10. Ibid. p.9.

11. Traps for young players. Unpublished talk. p.12.

12. GARLICK, Marina — "Library Service to Migrant Children in Australia" in Wilson Library Bulletin, October 1979. p.106.

13. DUNKLE, Margaret & GAMALI, Samia — Notes on Public Library Services to Children's Ethnic Groups in Victoria. Unpublished. September 1978. pp.4-5.

APPENDIX 1

(1) POPULATION IN AGE GROUPS: 1954 TO 1977

	Per cent			
30 June	Under 15	15-44	45-64	65 and over
1954	28.5	43.1	20.0	8.3
1961	30.2	41.4	19.9	8.5
1966	29.4	42.2	19.9	8.5
1971	29.0	42.9	19.8	8.4
1976	27.1	44.1	20.0	8.9
1977	26.6	44.5	19.8	9.0

(2) POPULATION IN CAPITAL CITIES AND OTHER MAJOR TOWNS OF 100,000 PERSONS OR MORE

('000 persons)

	30 June 1976
Sydney, New South Wales	3 094.8
Melbourne, Victoria	2 672.0
Brisbane, Queensland	985.9
Adelaide, South Australia	912.1
Perth, Western Australia	820.1
Newcastle, New South Wales	370.5
Wollongong, New South Wales	218.9
Canberra, Australian Capital Territory	221.8
Hobart, Tasmania	162.7
Geelong, Victoria	155.6
Gold Coast, Queensland	120.6
Total	9 720.0
Percentage of total population	69.85

Source: Year book Australia. No. 63, 1979. Canberra, Australia Bureau of Statistics. p. 82 (1) and p. 79 (2).

APPENDIX 2

(3) AUSTRALIAN AND OVERSEAS-BORN POPULATION

(per cent of total population)

Census	Australian born	Overseas born
1954	85.7	14.3
1961	83.1	16.9
1966	81.6	18.4
1971	79.8	20.2
1976	79.8	20.2

(4) ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER POPULATION

(persons)

State	30 June 1971	30 June 1976
New South Wales	23 873	40 450
Victoria	6 371	14 760
Queensland	31 922	41 345
South Australia	7 299	10 714
Western Australia	22 181	26 126
Tasmania	671	2 942
Northern Territory	23 381	23 751
Australian Capital Territory	255	827
Total Australia	115 953	160 915
Percentage of total population	.9	1.2

Source: Year book Australia. No. 63, 1979. Canberra, Australian Bureau of Statistics. p.81 (3) and p. 83 (4).

APPENDIX 3

(5) YOUNG PEOPLE OF NON ENGLISH-SPEAKING ORIGIN

School-aged population of non English-speaking origin born overseas or in Australia, June 1976 (preliminary)

Origin	5-9 years	10-14 years	Total (5-14) years
German	16 585	15 580	32 165
Scandinavian	1 145	1 760	2 905
Dutch	15 125	16 145	31 270
French	1 520	2 040	3 560
Swiss	330	645	975
Baltic	1 390	1 655	3 045
Russian	1 615	1 840	3 455
Polish	3 205	4 505	7 710
Czechoslovak	925	1 160	2 085
South Slav	20 530	18 660	39 190
Italian	44 895	49 455	94 340
Spanish	6 890	6 460	13 350
Greek	34 960	27 320	62 280
Maltese	10 840	9 735	20 575
Arabic	9 650	7 005	16 655
Turkish	3 470	2 980	6 450
Chinese	7 015	6 560	13 575
Indian etc.	6 805	6 145	12 950
South-east and East Asian	4 180	3 905	8 085
African and Mauritian	2 065	2 205	4 270
Oceanian (excluding New Zealand)	5 195	4 005	9 200
Hungarian	1 925	2 315	4 240
Estonian and Finnish	990	1 050	2 040
Rumanian	215	415	630
Israel	670	510	1 180
	202 135	194 045	396 180

Source: Migrant Services and Programs: Appendixes to the Report of the Review of Post-arrival Programs and Services for Migrnats. Canberra, Australian Government Publishing Service, 1978. p. 57.